and the question of natural evolution. To what extent this development is compatible with 'a culturalist approach that has put emphasis on human agency and symbolic language ... remains to be seen' (p. 80).

Overall, Arcangeli has written an up-to-date and lucid introduction to cultural history. The scope of the book, and the variety of approaches and orientations included, is impressive, even more so when taking into account the very concise character of the book. The book is also well translated; in this respect, the editors of Routledge are to be credited.

Cultural History: A Concise Introduction is a welcome contribution to the current state of literature on cultural history. I recommend the book to anyone interested in cultural history, yet especially to teachers of undergraduate courses who would like to acquaint their students with basic though accurate knowledge of cultural history.

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DOI: 10.3366/cult.2013.0035

Notes

1. Arcangeli, Alessandro (2007), *Che cos'è la storia culturale?*, Roma: Carroci editore.
2. Burke, Peter [2004] (2008), *What is Cultural History?*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
3. See also, Burke, Peter (2012), 'Strengths and Weaknesses of Cultural History', *Cultural History* 1:1, pp. 1–13.

Nicholas Mirzoeff (2011), *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality*, Durham: Duke University Press.

More than a decade ago, in his *An Introduction to Visual Culture*, Mirzoeff expressed his plan to 'mark out a broad trajectory for the emergence of contemporary visuality.' From the outset he made it clear that he envisaged not so much a historical reconstruction of visual culture than a Foucaultian-type genealogy which aimed at a 'strategic reinterpretation of the history of modern visual media understood collectively, rather than fragmented into disciplinary units such as film, television, art and video'.[1] These few sentences indicate well the magnitude of Mirzoeff's ambitions while also aptly describing the breadth and nature of the critical 'genealogy' that *The Right to Look* offers. The qualification 'strategic' accurately suggests a grand-scale project that is global in scope, eminently transgeneric and

interdisciplinary, and takes the broad perspective of the *longue durée* (the past four hundred years of world history, starting with the age of the slave trade). This intellectual project for which the basis was laid more than a decade ago has now come to fruition. At the same time, it can still be regarded as work-in-progress. Partly due to its vast compass, its fairly open key concepts (visuality and countervisuality), and its abrupt ending (no conclusion), *The Right to Look* can be considered as an unfinished book, albeit a very stimulating one. It is a book with an open architecture that begs to be engaged with: to see its empirical scope extended even more, its case studies deepened, and its conceptual framework challenged.

By taking the writings of the Scottish historian Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881) as his entry point into the subject matter of the book, the author starts *in media res*. Carlyle was a conservative anti-abolitionist whose somewhat reactionary ideas about heroic moral and intellectual leadership Mirzoeff takes as representative of the 'plantation complex' which spans a period from the second half of the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. 'Complexes' are historically overlapping discursive formations that can best be understood as distinctive configurations of governmentality including technologies of differentiation and ordering: scopic regimes which empower as much as regiment people's identifications and life projects. By the time Carlyle published his ideas about the enlightened panoptical hero, the subsequent 'complex', that of 'empire', was already born out of the French and Haitian revolutions. It comprises the period of imperial expansion, colonial occupation as well as the Third Reich. This was followed by what Mirzoeff calls the present-day 'military-industrial complex', which begins in the aftermath of WWI and lasts until today.

For each of the three complexes Mirzoeff distinguishes two sides, the hegemonic and the counterhegemonic side, as well as two forms or epochs: the standard form followed by the intensified form. So, for instance, the aforementioned Carlyle is situated in the (second) intensified form of the (first) plantation complex and finds himself, not surprisingly given his conservative views, on the hegemonic side of full-grown 'visuality'. The latter notion can best be explained in relation to its neighbouring counterparts, forms and complexes. Within the plantation complex, the 'visuality' associated with Carlyle follows and intensifies the earlier moment of what Mirzoeff calls 'oversight'. In this earlier moment, the organisation of labour, people, and natural resources is directed by the emblematic figure of the overseer who embodies a cluster of techniques of surveillance and management of which maps and tables are the most critical. In its later,

intensified form 'visuality' bureaucratises, enshrines and localises the inequalities in spite of increasing leakages both local (runaways, maroons) and translocal (the interpenetration of colony and metropole). These processes soon give way to the imperial complex which resembles more strongly Bentham's and Foucault's panopticism. The imperial governmentality is a centralised and segregationist system that prevails over the preceding Carlylian status quo by envisaging change in conduct and advancement (according to imposed norms). On the counterhegemonic side, the prototypical plantation overseer is contested by the revolutionary antislavery heroes of the likes of Toussaint Louverture, while the late plantation complex sees its visuality contested, reworked or veiled by what Mirzoeff labels 'abolition realism'. This encompasses very diverse imagery produced by metropolitan artists such as the Danish-French Jewish painter Camille Pissarro or the American photographer Henry Moore, which shows traces or, indeed, ellipses of the emergent 'modern' post-slavery condition: the absence of slave figures in places where they almost certainly occurred could be as telling as their conspicuous appearances.

In this way the author works his way through a multitude of both well-known careers and sometimes far lesser-known visual, graphic or textual materials, via the colonial and WWII period, to the post-1989 period. Here post-panoptic visuality is the key element of what the author labels present-day 'global counterinsurgency'. Although diachronically structured, Mirzoeff's long trajectory of western/global visuality is never a unilinear story, but a multidimensional one punctuated by analytical digressions or other side-steps, for instance in the form of 'counterpoints'. These are very focused mini chapters which reframe some of the material presented in the preceding chapter. In addition, *The Right to Look* offers several unexpected intersections, such as for instance the association of W.E.B. Du Bois and Antonio Gramsci in the way they construed 'the south' as vantage point of global liberation from fascism and (later on) anti-decolonisation repression. His discussion of the Algerian war in this context is subtly interspersed with a wealth of fascinating imagery and documents both historical and contemporary. When, eventually, the author cites a communist journalist claiming that the decolonisation struggle in Algeria was not a battle 'only a gigantic police operation', he announces the advent of the modern post-panoptical condition which combines extreme forms of (often digital) visualisation (e.g. computer warfare) with new strategies of optical invisibility through chaotic, informal or under-the-radar operations and surveillance – Mirzoeff does not use the word 'sousveillance'.

Even though the long trajectory of visuality is punctuated by violence, punishment, repression and war, these aspects are highlighted consistently only in the author's treatment of global counterinsurgency. The instrumentarium of counterinsurgency is that of anti-visibility, disguise, and omnipresence, its main actors are 'terrorists', Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV), mobile or static surveillance cameras which operate in domestic zones as much as in far-away territories. We are told, for instance, that on a yearly basis the United States spends $32 billion on 'invisible' state operations which range from interrogation and torture by state actors (in the persona of 'Other Government Agency') to precision killings by drones. When considering the omnipresence and pervasiveness of the current 'neovisuality', the author emphasises how the 'permanent war' has become more cultural than political and has insinuated itself into people's everyday lives. For Mirzoeff, democracy and education may lead us out of this predicament. An equally vague but nonetheless challenging final suggestion is the need to 'reclaim, rediscover, and retheorize the practices and spaces of everyday life', in order to resist its inherent militarization.

It should be clear from these impressions that *The Right to Look* covers a vast amount of ground, offers forceful conceptual tools (such as 'complex' and 'visuality') as well as meticulous and often extremely well-documented fine-grained analysis. However, all this turns it also into a very risky undertaking. For one, a clear-cut division between hegemonic and counterhegemonic visuality may be heuristically productive, but it runs the risk of dichotomization where a strong argument can be made in favour of complicity, polysemy and articulations (cf. Stuart Hall) – notions which fit better the more processual 'search for hegemony'.[2]

Furthermore, as indicated above, the different units of analysis are very unequally distributed over the different chapters. While 'oversight', i.e. the first form ('standard') of the first complex ('plantation') of one side (the hegemonic) is treated extensively in one whole chapter (one), the last chapter (seven) covers the entire 'military-industrial' complex in both its forms and from both its (counter)hegemonic sides. Because the scope of each chapter increases steadily from chapter five onwards, one gets the impression that the author was running out of material to proportionately document the different units of his grand scheme. Moreover, the absence of a concluding chapter endorses the feeling that in the end the author also ran out of time. Although this odd repartition does not jeopardise the coherence nor the consistency of the book, it does not

mean that there are no blind spots or truncated analyses. An example of the former is the fact that the visual language of evolutionism is almost entirely left out in the treatment of the imperial (colonial) visuality complex (nineteenth to twentieth century). However, the spatiotemporal mapping of human, animal, and artefactual diversity on a global scale bespeaks evolutionism's elemental panoptical nature. Moreover, evolutionism was a multimodal discourse *par excellence,* comprising a wide range of graphic and visual manifestations (from skull measurements to evolutionary charts for particular species or artefacts), performances (human zoos), and institutions (museums and universal exhibitions). It is difficult to imagine why all this was left out, even if it was not (re)analysed in detail.

Mirzoeff's summary treatment of the material in his later chapters, however, is not without danger. This is clear for instance from the curtailed analysis of the well-known photographs taken and distributed from within the American-Iraqi prison at Abu Ghraib. About these snap shots, Mirzoeff merely tells us that they served to frighten off potential insurgents although they were probably circulated by accident. Quite disappointingly, this is not even the beginning of an analysis in a book and a chapter that delves deeply into the messiness and the complex entanglements of post-panoptical visuality. Given Mirzoeff's interest and familiarity with the Abu Ghraib case, this could have been presented as a case in point.[3] Gourevitch and Morris for one claim that some of the soldiers-photographers took these pictures either to protect themselves against future accusations of torture or as evidence of their strenuous working environment in view of future claims of post-traumatic stress disorder compensations.[4] In order to enhance the social deixis of the photographs-as-evidence in future court cases, soldiers chose to take part in the scenes. At the same time, their smiling faces and thumbs-up gestures softened the evidential nature of the pictures whose authors/actors tried not to alarm colleagues and superiors by giving them the appearance of casual snapshots. Apart from illustrating the intricacies of mass-mediated counter-counterinsurgency – a point made by Mirzoeff – this case could also signal the messy entanglements of the hegemonic and the counterhegemonic,[5] an operation which could certainly be accommodated by if not enriching Mirzoeff's formidable book.

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DOI: 10.3366/cult.2013.0036

Notes

1. Mirzoeff, Nicholas (1999), *An Introduction to Visual Culture*, London: Routledge, p. 13.
2. See: Bayart, Jean-François (1985), 'L'énonciation du politique', *Revue française de science politique,* 35:3, pp. 343–63; Mbembe, Achille (1992), 'Provisional notes on the postcolony', *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute,* 62, pp. 3–37.
3. Mirzoeff, Nicholas (2006), 'Invisible empire: Visual culture, embodied spectacle, and Abu Ghraib', *Radical History Review,* 95, pp. 21–44.
4. Gourevitch, Philip and Errol Morris (2008), *Standard Operating Procedure: A War Story*, London: Picador.
5. See Arnaut, Karel (2011), *The Human Zoo After Abu Ghraib: Performance and Subalternity in the 'Cam Era'*, Tilburg Papers in Culture Studies 11, Tilburg: Babylon.

Joanna Bourke (2011), *What it Means to be Human: Reflections from 1791 to the Present*, London: Virago.

Joanna Bourke's new book engages with one of the most urgent questions facing contemporary culture. In the face of rapid technological change, human identity is becoming increasingly uncertain. This book is concerned particularly with 'the unknowability of all animals' (p. 16) and how definitions of the human have tended to deploy the language of rights in distinguishing the human from the animal. 'What it means to be human' is becoming increasingly uncertain in ways unimaginable at the beginning of the twentieth century. The book cover image harks back to the seventeenth century, foregrounding the human (specifically female)-animal categories. The three graces in Rubens' painting appear in a collage: women above the waist and animal below. Bourke takes as her starting point an argument for women's rights expressed in a letter from 'An Earnest Englishwoman' (1872) using a comparison between the treatment of animals and women. The Earnest Englishwoman audaciously argued for women to be treated at least as favourably as animals. Typical of Bourke's approach, previously seen in her books on *Rape, Fear* and *Dismembering the Male*, this book covers an impressive range of material, situating it in a broad cultural historical framework. In juxtaposing often unexpected but illuminating examples, new questions emerge. Here she takes the reader through some familiar terrain (Descartes, Bentham, Wollstonecraft) but selects some unexpected reference points to expand the field of study and set in motion other possible lines of enquiry.

Bourke reassesses ideas about the human, noting that the distinctions between the human and the animal tend to be both volatile and violent. References are made from the outset to Giorgio Agamben, Jacques Derrida and Catharine MacKinnon. Bourke